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SUBJECT: TFH01: HONDURAS COUP: POLITICAL WRAP-UP 08/18/09

REF: TEGUCIGALPA 737 AND PREVIOUS

¶1. (U) This is another in a series of round-ups of political news in the aftermath of the June 28 forcible removal and exile of President Manuel Zelaya from Honduras.

Micheletti on Live Talk Show

¶2. (U) In an August 18 interview on the national television show "Face to Face," de facto President Roberto Micheletti said that there is agreement on about 80 percent of the San Jose Accord, but there is no agreement on the return of Zelaya, amnesty, and the moratorium on judicial processes. He said that for Zelaya to return, he must face 18 court charges and defend himself in court. Micheletti went into detail about conversations held at the Ambassador's residence in the days before the coup between the Ambassador, himself, the DCM, Zelaya, FM Patricia Rodas, and Secretary of the Presidency Enrique Flores Lanza. Micheletti speculated that, if no action had been taken against Zelaya on June 28, Zelaya would have held the Constituent Assembly and dissolved the Congress, Supreme Court, and Attorney General starting on June 29.

¶3. (U) In an interview published in the August 18 edition of national daily La Prensa, Micheletti said he continued to believe the Arias mediation was a good alternative to resolve the crisis, but repeated his assertion that a legal presidential succession took place June 28, and that Zelaya should come back to Honduras to face the charges against him. Micheletti added that while he did not know any details regarding the Ambassador's departure on August 14, it would be the "sovereign decision of the USG whether to remove him permanently or send him to another country."

Human Rights Visit

¶4. (SBU) The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) mission, composed of President Luz Patricia Mejia (Venezuela), Vice-President Victor Abramovich (Argentina), Felipe Gonzalez (Chile), Paolo Carozza (United States), and Executive Secretary Santiago Canton (Argentina) met on August 17 with the Supreme Court of Justice, and plans to meet with members of Congress, the military, the police, civil society, and the media, among others. According to local media, de facto Vice Foreign Minister Martha Lorena Alvarado said that many human rights organizations have been infiltrated by leftists, and pointed to the Venezuelan, Argentine, and Chileans on the IACHR. More details will be reported septel.

De Facto Regime Claims to PNG Another Mission

15. (SBU) The de facto Honduran Foreign Ministry has announced on August 18 a break in relations with Argentina and that it is closing their Embassy in Tegucigalpa. According to a communique, they will conduct diplomatic business through the Argentine Embassy in Israel. The announcement states that this measure was taken as a reciprocal action for Argentina's decision to cut communications with the Honduran Embassy in Buenos Aires. (Note: Honduras' Ambassador to Argentina Carmen Eleonora Ortiz Williams is a regime supporter. End note.) While some media sources, including the BBC, report that Argentine diplomats have been given three days to leave, the Argentine Charge told Charge that his Embassy had not received a note verbale asking them to leave and had been instructed by the Buenos Aires not to take any action until receiving such a note. (Note: The de facto regime issued a similar announcement about the Venezuelan Embassy in July, but the Venezuelan diplomats still occupy their mission. End note.)

Zelaya Minister Editorial

16. (SBU) According to an editorial published in the August 18 La Tribuna by former Zelaya Defense Minister Edmundo

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Orellana, the San Jose Accord provides the only way forward for Honduras that will be accepted by the international community. (Note: Orellana resigned as Defense Minister June 25 in connection with Zelaya's dismissal of Chief of Defense Vasquez. End note.) He wrote that it seemed that Honduras was more beloved by foreigners than by Hondurans themselves. Furthermore, he added, the United States supported the Arias Plan, and therefore had placed its prestige in Latin America on acceptance of the plan. He argued that the international community will not accept any solution that does not include the restitution of President Zelaya, pointing out that, in this regard "Obama, Fidel, and Chavez are on the same side."

HENSHAW